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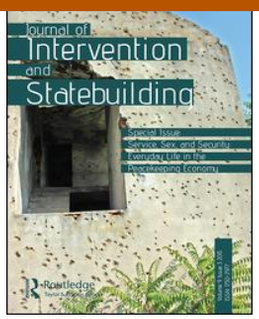

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# From Hybridity to Networked Relationality: Actors, Ideologies and the Legacies of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement

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**ABSTRACT**

This article reflects on hybrid relationality as an analytical lens for peacebuilding. It narrates the evolution of 'the hybrid turn' and engages with common critiques of hybridity. It notes an additional critique of hybridity's implicit normativity. This article agrees that relational approaches have much to offer hybrid peacebuilding analysis and argues they could be strengthened with complementation from a networked lens. The proposed networked relational framework is animated with examples from Sudanese peacebuilding following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. Overall, the article builds on critiques of hybridity and offers a networked approach as a supplement to new relational frameworks.

**KEYWORDS**

Peacebuilding; hybridity; networks; relationality; Sudan; South Sudan

## Introduction

International peacebuilding is 'a set of transitional activities to implement peace agreements after civil wars' which are implemented by entities external to the conflict society (Sørbø 2004, iv). These international interventions coexist and contend with national and local-level peacebuilding initiatives and other, locally-driven forms of social, political and economic transformation. These activities are driven by competing actors, each with different ideologies about what defines peace and how to build it. Together, these various actors and ideologies constitute a multi-layered and fundamentally 'agonistic' peacebuilding space (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013, 764). Since the outcomes of interactions between actors and ideologies determine the form of peace which emerges in post-conflict contexts, analysing these interactions is an important step towards understanding how to bring about sustainable forms of peace and avoid its fragile and unjust iterations. Analytical frameworks should be adept at detecting which interactions are productive and which are obstructive for sustainable peace because they provide the first link in chains of investigations which eventually inform policy actions. Flaws within frameworks could result in the misidentification of obstructive interactions as productive and *vice versa*. In addition, a flawed framework could mean that

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some problematic interactions go undetected. These failings eventually manifest in policy. It is therefore crucial that analytical frameworks perform well. To this end, this article asks what analytical framework is appropriate to guide analysis of the 'drama in the site of social interactions' between competing actors and ideologies during peacebuilding (Ron 2009, 3).

The first third of the article reflects on hybridity and its emerging conceptual supplement, relationality, as the dominant analytical lens for analysing peacebuilding spaces from critical perspectives.[1] It begins by narrating the evolution of the 'hybrid turn' (Brown 2017; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2016) and by demarcating *descriptive, normative* and *analytical* uses of hybridity. Narrowing its scope onto analytical hybridity, the article highlights its contributions but shows how it remains a divisive framework with many vocal critics (Brigg 2018; Hameiri and Jones 2018; Heathershaw 2013; Laffey and Nadarajah 2012; Nadarajah and Rampton 2015; Zanker 2017). I show that even after numerous reflections on hybridity, scholars are calling for peacebuilding analysis to go 'beyond hybridity' (Hameiri and Jones 2018). Relational thinking has emerged as its key supplementary concept (Brigg 2018; Hunt 2017; Joseph 2018).

In the middle third of the article, I argue that relational thinking can, to some extent, counter the common critiques levelled at analytical hybridity but that an additional concept is needed; namely, networks. Specifically, networked relationality can address hybridity's crypto-normativity. Here, I explain why crypto-normativity is a problem for peace analysis and suggest why networked relationality is an appropriate remedy. By borrowing conceptual and methodological innovations from networked relationality (Castells 2011a; Crossley 2010; Mische 2011; White et al. 2007), the article presents a framework for analysing interactions in peacebuilding which can extend hybrid relationality.

Finally, in the last third of the article, I draw on empirical examples from Sudan and South Sudan in the wake of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in order to illustrate the framework. This, the longest section of the paper, demonstrates how the analytical framework can produce knowledge which, after subsequent steps of enquiry, can inform policy actions in service of sustainable peace. Overall, it suggests how a hybrid analysis of peacebuilding can be strengthened with networked relationality.

## The rise and rise of hybrid approaches

Hybridity has various *descriptive*, *normative* and *analytical* applications which have been outlined by Brown (2017), Dinnen and Kent (2015) and others (Millar 2014; Peterson 2012). Importantly, it is only the analytical application which concerns this article. An outline of all three below should make clear which specific aspect of hybridity is relevant to this argument.

Hybridity can be used *descriptively* to acknowledge the fundamental messiness of peacebuilding. 'Hybrid orders' describe the outcomes of inevitable mixing between various peacebuilding stakeholders: for example, Gacaca courts in Rwanda (Sriram 2012), state-formation in Timor Leste (Boege et al. 2008) and security-sector reform in Afghanistan (Jarstad and Olsson 2012). In this descriptive use, both positive and negative forms of hybridity can emerge from various negotiations, struggles and encounters (Richmond 2015; Richmond 2019). Many studies draw on *descriptive hybridity* in combination with other evaluative frameworks. Examples include investigations into legal pluralism

(Forsyth 2017), or securitised gender relations (George and Kent 2017; McLeod 2015). Here, *descriptive hybridity* serves as a metaphor which signals a background context of general convolution. The plain fact of complexity during peacebuilding is not contested in this article. Indeed, as put rather cheekily by Zaum (2012, 124), highlighting complexity is nothing but a 'statement of the obvious'.

Hybridity is also used *normatively* to promote the agency of local actors and ideologies in the face of the international. In this usage of hybridity, there is an explicit postulation - backed by evidence from interventions such as those made in Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s - that international peacebuilding is ultimately harmful and *should* be hybridised, meaning toned-down, with local agency. Scholars writing from this position produce prescriptive research recommending pathways towards local empowerment against international interveners (Richmond and Mitchell 2011; Visoka and Richmond 2017).[2] Normative applications of hybridity in peace research, in which the imperialism of international peacebuilders has been firmly established from the outset, are not contested here.

Finally, and what concerns this article, are the *analytical* applications of hybridity. Hybridity provides a diagnostic framework for analysing how interactions between different actors and ideologies function or disfunction. In this application, hybridity is 'not something to be achieved, nor does it describe a good or bad state of affairs in itself. In this sense it is not prescriptive' (Brown 2017, 453). Instead, it serves as a 'heuristic device' (Forsyth 2017) to illuminate a range of problematic and/or productive sites of exchange. Knowledge of such interactions forms one of the primary steps in chains of investigations which end with policies which support sustainable peace. Such policies can be implemented by a range of actors including national governments, regional authorities, third sector organisations and international peacebuilders. In this sense, analytical hybridity provides the necessary epistemological material for subsequent normative questioning which, in turn, informs action on the ground. Its two main analytical applications are outlined below.

## Hybridity within the international and the local

Hybrid analyses have gone beyond the habitual conflation of international with liberal identities and local with non-liberal identities found in the *mission civilisatrice* critique of international peacebuilding (Paris 2002). Taken in concert with investigations into local adaptability (de Coning 2018) and resilience (Chandler 2012), hybrid analyses have unpacked local agency to demonstrate that the local is highly agential, stratified and diverse (Kappler 2014; Mac Ginty 2011). Hybrid analyses have also nuanced the international: see for example, Lundqvist and Öjendal's (2018) comparative study of interventions in Nepal and Cambodia, and Boege and Rinck's (2019) study of state-formation in Bougainville. In both studies, the international does not impress ideological liberalism on peacebuilding but performs a more technocratic and supportive role. Furthermore, hybrid analyses have demonstrated that a spectrum of co-operation and conflict exists between locals and internationals which includes local acceptance of the international and *vice versa* (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2016, 221). Tensions occurring between internationals and locals are not all-encompassing but occur at specific 'frictional sites' (Schia and Karlsrud 2013, 233) for example, across different 'institutional, practical, ritual and conceptual' spheres (Millar 2014, 501).

While hybrid analyses have addressed the habitual conflation of liberal-international and non-liberal local identities, they still draw criticism from those claiming that the international is 'monolithically' liberal (Laffey and Nadarajah 2012, 407). Critics claim that interest in the liberal international pervades hybrid analyses to the extent that it is not clear which aspects of the international are the source of friction except in relation to liberalism (Heathershaw 2013, 279–280; Lee 2015; Sabaratnam 2013, 267). Hameiri and Jones (2018, 56) state that 'despite recent efforts at nuance, hybridity ultimately dichotomises and reifies local-traditional and international-liberal ideal-type assemblages'. While it may be more complicated than that - and the above examples show that hybrid analyses do not unconsciously merge international and liberal identities - a general interest in 'the international as liberal' is still detectable in the literature, overall (Hunt 2017). This is not necessarily a problem for any individual study but the general focal point is increasingly harder to justify in light of recent international policy trends to adopt new 'policy frameworks which move beyond, or unsettle, the liberal peace model' (Moe and Stepputat 2018, 294). This is also important given the rise of international peace actors who self-identify as 'non-liberal' such as China (Paffenholz 2015, 863).

### *Hybridity beyond the international and the local*

In its second analytical application, hybridity is applied to analyse interactions beyond international and local exchanges. It examines 'the complex linkages, relationships and frictions that exist between local, national, and transnational institutions, actors and discourses' (Forsyth et al. 2017, 413). Proponents argue that hybridity draws attention to the 'constant process of negotiation' where 'multiple sources of power in a society compete, coalesce, seep into each other, engage in mimicry, domination and accommodation' (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2016, 220). It urges 'a focus on where power lies within systems, who exercises power and how' (Jackson and Albrecht 2018, 41,43) and is adept to illuminate the 'spatialised political economic struggles and processes that play out across local, provincial, national, and transnational scales' (Allen and Dinnen 2017, 500).

To this end, several empirical studies have examined hybridity beyond the mixing of the international and the local. For example, Smith (2014) has shown how national governments in Indonesia have led a project of hybrid state formation. Popplewell (2019) has observed that 'the global' in peacebuilding can be brought via different avenues other than via international peacebuilders. Therefore, global-local hybridity can exist independently of the so-called importers of peace. In addition, several studies combine hybridity with other evaluative frameworks of power dynamics such as feminism. For example, McLeod's (2015) careful gendering of hybrid peacebuilding examines power dynamics at the intersections of masculinities and femininities. See also Martin de Almagro's feminist discussion of gendered 'hybrid clubs' (2018) and McLeod and O'Reilly's Special Issue on feminism in *Peacebuilding* (2019).

Notwithstanding these contributions, the analytical hybridity literature still draws criticism for tending to 'focus primarily on the interface between the international and the local' (Hunt 2018, 56). Paffenholz (2015, 863) determines that the focus on the international-local relationship in hybridity scholarship is 'excessive'. Many studies acknowledge the international and local are only one pair among a range of relevant actors

but express specific interest in focusing on that site of exchange (See Jackson and Albrecht 2018, 39). Again, this not a problem for any one particular study – each author can choose their own preferred focal point within a complex schema. However, when taken together as an entire literature, hybridity scholarship is consistently rebuked for its preoccupation with international-local interactions.

## From hybridity to relationality

The pro-hybridity crowd may disagree with the characterisation put by their critics, but the fact remains that, in general and overall, hybrid analysis has a reputation for a) focusing on the liberal aspects of the international and b) focusing on local-international interactions. As a result, there is somewhat of an impasse within peace studies between those in favour and those against hybrid analysis. As noted by Hunt (2017, 211), some are content with this us-them stand-off, but others strive for synthesis. In seeking to make conceptual manoeuvres which will transform hybridity into something more universally acceptable, several scholars have called for an appraisal of the foundational concept upon which hybrid peace analysis is based; hybridity as critical theory.[3]

The incorporation of hybridity into the social sciences was originally developed as a way of understanding and analysing cultural interactions between colonial and post-colonial subjects (Bhabha 1994; Pieterse 1994; R. J. Young 1994). Bhabha (1994) argued that in the context of interventions, a 'third space' is produced when two (normally antagonistic) entities meet to negotiate a third common position. Several postcolonial scholars (Gilroy 2013; Hall 1996; Hutnyk 2005) have critiqued this position because it presumes 'two anterior purities' (Gilroy 1994, 54–55) prior to their mixing. Therefore, hybridity – as a foundational concept – can be seen to promote an 'essentialising' approach to identities (Bargués-Pedreny and Mathieu 2018; Brigg 2018; Joseph 2018; Martin de Almagro 2018). Brigg (2018, 353) has argued this foundation could subtly steer analysis of *difference* towards 'identitarian' logics whereby cultures which have the potential to clash are viewed in terms of their 'thingness' and are seen as somewhat fixed. It is certainly logical to see how this foundational concept might direct an analyst towards essentialising the international as liberal.

Furthermore, it has been noted that the concept of hybridity, at its foundational core, and before its introduction into peace studies, is predisposed to focus on dyadic interactions. While hybridity 'avoids the politics of polarity' (Pile 1994, 255) by showing the emergence of the third space between two ideal poles, the poles themselves are nevertheless essential for a hybrid analysis. In other words, in *hybridity as critical theory*, poles are not only reified but also preordained as the units of analysis. It is logical to see how this foundational concept might promote the analysis of peace interactions in dyadic modes i.e. to focus on the interaction between A and B rather than between, for example, A,B,C and D or to ask what is the impact of A, B and C's activities on D, E and F. This explains why Zanker (2017, 180–181) suggests that 'though the hybridity literature [in peace studies] recognises the multiple agents involved in a process of implementation, it usually does not allow for more than two actors or their internal heterogeneity'. Thus, it is logical to see how such a conceptual background might promote a focus on polarised international-local interactions.

Certainly, the essentialising and polarising tendencies do not find expression in all analysis written from within the hybrid school in peace studies. There is no path dependency at work here; more of a subtle - and perfectly resistible - nudging. Numerous exceptions have been highlighted in both sections above (Jackson and Albrecht 2018; Millar 2016). Indeed, the purpose of these ventures into hybridity's deep theoretical background was not to find root causes of poor analysis, and thus concede the point. Rather, they were made by pro-hybridity scholars in the interests of guarding against the enduring critiques which have earned hybrid peace analysis its (fair or unfair) reputation. In that sense it has been productive; investigations into hybridity – as a foundational concept - have illuminated the specific areas where the underlying theory of peace analysis could be bolstered. Seeking a supplementary theory which is explicitly de-essentialising and de-polarising, several scholars have identified relationality[4] as an appropriate concept (Hameiri and Jones 2015; Hunt 2017; Hunt 2018).

In countering hybridity's essentialising tendency, Brigg (2013, 87) demonstrates that relational thinking is fundamentally de-essentialising owing to its basis in a social ontology in which society is viewed 'not as a space "containing" relations, nor an arena where relations are played out. It is rather the very tissue of relations (society "is relation" and does not "have relations")'. Steered by this foundational concept, several relational studies have taken a de-essentialising view of identities in peacebuilding contexts. For example, Martin de Almagro (2018) has shown, using feminist conceptualisations of performativity, how 'the local' and 'the international' are non-essential identities which the same actor can occupy (or conjure) in different relational spaces. Accruing knowledge about the fluid and changing nature of contestation between relational – and not fixed – identities can inform targeted policy support for secure social relations. This is has been shown in Brigg's (2018) example of restorative justice in Aboriginal Australia.

Further, in countering the polarising tendency, Hunt (2018, 65) has suggested that a relational approach could be invoked to augment hybrid thinking by 'opening up engagement with the whole system'. He shows how relational approaches can be used to analyse relationships among a 'constellation of providers [of security]' including local governments, regional chiefs, vigilante mobs, and international peacebuilders. In a similar vein, Hameiri and Jones (2018) have applied a scalar lens to analyse relationships at various cross-cutting tiers of political authority. In line with these studies, it is important to show which constellations of relationships are 'predatory, parasitic or mutual' (Hunt 2017, 219–221) and to locate them at 'intra and inter-scalar sites of socio-political contestation' (Hameiri and Jones 2018, 74). Upon the basis of those findings and following additional questioning, it is then possible to arrive at a better understanding of where key actors can be supported to shape and transform their relationships in ways that lead to enhanced security (Hunt 2017, 225).

## *Hybrid analysis as implicitly normative*

Relational thinking has clearly contributed to the honing of hybrid peace analysis. Yet, the normativity of hybridity, as a foundational concept, also leaves the analytical framework it informs open to persistent critiques. Hybridity, as a critical theory, and before its introduction into peace studies, is designed to expose the ambivalent effects of colonisation in such a way that promotes the agency of the intervened upon in relation to the

intervening power. As is well-known, hybridity was introduced into peace studies as part of attempts to side-step the short-comings of the *mission civilisatrice* critique of international peacebuilding (Paris 2002), while at the same time retaining a postcolonial critique of peace interventions. Proponents argue that hybridity can 'reveal, or even provide, a politics of liberation for subaltern constituencies' (Nadarajah and Rampton 2015, 8). As argued at the start of this article, it is recommended in explicitly normative hybrid studies that processes of hybridisation *ought* to be encouraged in peacebuilding in order to alleviate the ill-effects of liberal imperialism rolled out during blue-print interventions. This decolonial application of hybridity is to be applauded when done openly in this normative tradition to produce explicitly prescriptive research.[5] However, a problem arises when this normative promulgation of hybridity is unconsciously subsumed within its analytical applications. In other words, when its analytical function is crypto-normative.

For some proponents of hybridity, this normative function is presented as combining well with its analytical utility as a heuristic device. Hybridity has been endorsed for its aptness to understand patterns of interaction during peacebuilding; it is described as a 'framework in which power circulates between its constituent actors, who are involved in a range of discussions of how conflict can be resolved or transformed at its related local, elite and state, regional, and international levels' (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2016, 229). Yet, much of this analytical prowess comes with implicit endorsements: 'this book recommends the concepts of hybridity and hybridisation as a way of overcoming hegemonic narratives of conflict and internationally supported peace interventions' (Mac Ginty 2011, 2). Bernhard (2013, 14) presents hybridity's utility 'not *merely* as a mixture of different ideas and approaches of how to build peace, but as a tool to resist dominant peacebuilding approaches'. In this sense, many of those promoting hybridity as an analytical tool for understanding multiple interactions and their effects on peacebuilding are doing so from a morally anti-imperialist positionality and with a normative emancipatory agenda.

I accept the arguments of post-positivists that all analysis is, to some extent, driving towards normative aims.[6] However, analytical and normative studies are nevertheless different lines of scientific enquiry and require different modes of questioning: analytical questions seek to know what *is* the case and normative questions seek to know what *should be* the case. Normative and analytical enquiries, while always interrelated and engaged in iterative exchange, should be epistemologically sequenced, rather than simultaneous. In addition, clarity about which line of enquiry is being followed is necessary for coherent and productive debate. I suggest that it is the cloudy combination of normative and analytical lines of enquiry that is partly responsible for the enduring critiques of hybrid peace analysis. This crypto-normativity could also contribute to confusion between those in favour and those against hybrid analysis. To put it crudely, an analytical question (what *is* the case?) such as 'What power relations have impeded sustainable peace in, for example, Sierra Leone?' cannot coherently be addressed with a normatively anti-imperialist framework because the analytical enquiry will be on course to discover colonial forms of problematic power relations and, in the process, overlook others.

While successfully promoting the contestation of colonial hegemony when it has occurred, it is precisely this prior normative agenda which impinges on the ability for hybridity to be used as an analytical tool to understand all forms of ideological and/or actor exchanges during peace interventions. While numerous axes of resistance and

domination exist between and among the local as well as between and among the international, hybridity *á la* Bhabha could subtly direct analysis away from these patterns of interaction since it is conceptually predisposed to finding the West as the imperialising force. This explains the entrapment experienced when hybridity's analytical purpose is combined with its postcolonial ethical stance. If the need to 'move beyond international/local power dynamics' and be 'attentive to the pluralities of power and practice' (Mitchell 2011, 1623) is to be met, a further conceptual move is called for.

## Towards a networked approach to relational analysis

The above critiques specifically call for an analytical supplement for hybridity which a) counteracts a tendency to essentialise and polarise and b) is equipped to identify relations of oppression and domination but which is not predisposed to finding them at any particular axis of identities. I argue that networked relationality is a logical framework for this task. First, in concert with Hunt's (2017; 2018) calls for seeing whole systems, networked relationality specifically guides analysis beyond 'multiple duets' (Wellman 1997, 20) and towards the comprehension of a 'broader structure' (Crossley 2010, 40). Second, in concert with Brigg (2018) and Hameiri and Jones (2018), networked relationality conceptualises the structure of interactions as existing within a historically constituted and politically uneven social reality in which relations – not entities or identities – are ontologically primary. It is therefore adept to expose all manner of productive or problematic relations between actors and ideologies within a non-essentialising frame. As such, a networked relational approach is equipped to detect unequal relations of a colonial nature but is not predisposed to finding them and overlooking others. Importantly, this analytical frame, in turn, provides the material for *subsequent but not parallel* normative arguments and investigations. A normative investigation (asking what *should* be done about *xyz* unequal relations to promote sustainable peace) could follow on from the below proposed analytical process whose role is to establish the existence of *xyz* unequal power relations in the first place.

### *Networks as conceptual supplement*

Networks have become particularly visible in sociological enquiry in light of impressive innovations in actor-network theory, global production networks, social network analysis and transnationalism. While network theory and networked relationality are related and mutually relevant fields, this article does not engage with network theory *per se*. While theories of networked relationality do borrow terminology from pure network theory, they have nevertheless arisen out of sociological enquiries within relational social ontology and not within the positivist tradition of network analysis (Borgatti et al. 2009; Borgatti, Brass, and Halgin 2014; Knox, Savage, and Harvey 2006). To understand the role of 'the network' in this framework, it is important to recognise its roots in the literature on ontological relationality rather than deriving from the positivist tradition of pure network analysis.

The network motif has been adopted by relational scholars such as Mische (2011), Emirbayer (1997) and Castells (2004; 2011a) in order to identify a range of multi-directional interactions. For networked relational analysts, network principles are used in a

theoretical, as well as a methodological sense (Mische 2011, 80) to formalise the analysis of dynamic encounters as an interwoven 'set of institutions, knowledge, practices, and artefacts thereof' (Riles 2001, 3). Networked principles are applied to make analytically managable interdependent systems of material, social and political relations during 'all forms of exchange' (Castells 2007, 27). As such, networked approaches to relationality have been guided by the 'anti-categorical imperative' (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994, 1414) [7] which underpins a conceptual commitment to viewing the links between non-essential entities in a 'broader structure' (Crossley 2010, 40).

Networked relationality has been applied to analyses of transnational activism (Keck and Sikkink 1998), global social movements (Diani and McAdam 2003), and minority advocacy campaigns (Riles 2001). These social phenomena share two key aspects with peacebuilding: a) they are goal-oriented projects in which the goals may be differently defined by the various actors involved b) they often, but not necessarily, combine a range of global and local actors who do not participate in isolated duets but as constituents in webs of cross-cutting exchanges. It is these conceptual insights and their analytical applications which make them appropriate for borrowing into an analysis of peacebuilding. The below framework is developed from a combination of various networked relational analyses and is tailored to peacebuilding analysis.

## *Networked relationality in peacebuilding analysis*

The most important contribution of networked relationality is the epistemological and methodological separation of actors and ideologies as suggested by Riles (2001). This chimes with observations made in the hybrid peace literature of differences between 'conceptual hybridity and behavioural hybridity' (Millar 2014) and 'spaces of interplay' at agential, ideational and processural spheres (Belloni 2012, 24). Where in a hybrid analysis, these various spaces of interplay are analysed at once, a networked analysis provides for their analytical distinction. To be specific, networked relationality makes clear the distinctions between 'points and flows', which make up the agential entities within a social system and the ideologies circulating between them. Applying networked relationality to peacebuilding allows for the conceptualisation of peacebuilding actors as points – for which there is one method of analysis – and the ideologies circulating in between them as the flows – for which there is a related but separate method of analysis. Importantly, the analytical separation of actors and ideologies does not entail a rejection of their interdependence. Instead, they are seen as 'inherently recursive' (Riles 2001) and provision is made for this, methodologically.

The second contribution is that any discussion of actors and ideologies includes a focus on the location and patterns of circulation of their characteristics within the broader network structure. This locative element fits well with Hunt's (2017; 2018) relational turn and also Hameiri and Jones (2018) and Allen and Dinnen (2017) work on scalar analysis. As Diani and McAdam (2003, 4,7) explain 'referring to networks provides a clue to assess the social location of specific actors as well as to identify general structural patterns […] The identification of points, of the relevant flows between them, and of the boundaries of the network represent fundamental steps

in any study of network structures'. The establishment of the situated and circulatory nature of actors and ideologies renders meaningless claims that some actors or ideologies are, for example, 'dominant' or 'legitimate'. Instead, their dominance or legitimacy will be specified with reference to their situatedness and circulatory patterns throughout the network structure.

The third contribution of a networked relational approach is to pay attention to networked hinterlands. As well as looking inside the network of peacebuilding actors and ideologies, it is also important to look outside of it to broader and prior networks. Using the methodology of networked relationality, it becomes clear that these actors and ideologies which comprise the peacebuilding network, are structured by and mediated by broader exchanges of 'macronetworks' of norms, institutions, ideas and value systems (Castells 2011b). It is important to establish whether problematic or productive networked relations are explicable through exchanges made during peacebuilding or during broader and prior networked encounters. Accruing knowledge in the above three domains will provide a detailed picture of which imbalances between actors and ideologies are conflict-promoting or peace-promoting and where specifically they are located in the relational system. In turn, this epistemic material will inform subsequent normative questioning about how the uncovered imbalances should be addressed, and by whom, in service of building sustainable peace.

## Networked relationality in Sudanese peacebuilding

The framework is animated with empirical examples from Sudanese peacebuilding following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. Due to space limitations, it is not possible to conduct a full case study nor an exhaustive and original analysis of Sudanese peace. Instead, the empirical aspects illustrate what kinds of questions the proposed framework is equipped to answer and how. The Sudanese case is productive for this task because the CPA was a landmark peace agreement heralded as ending 'Africa's longest civil war' (Korybko 2018) between centres of power in Khartoum and Juba. It provided for a referendum on the secession of the South and, in 2011, delivered two new states whose paths towards peace included several supra-national, international, national, regional and community-level efforts. To be clear, the CPA has been technically successful because widespread conflict between North and South Sudan has not re-emerged. However, in the decade following its signing, neither state has achieved sustainable peace: both continue to grapple with severe domestic conflicts with annual loss of life at least as bad as in peak of the civil war (ACLED 2015; Villiers 2015). South Sudan (formerly southern Sudan) entered civil war in 2013 and has since been dubbed the 'world's most failed state' (Sen 2015). Meanwhile, the government in the Republic of Sudan (formerly north Sudan) has continued to fight multiple insurgencies in its peripheries and, in 2019, faced a popular uprising which toppled the semi-authoritarian regime which had reigned for thirty years. In 2020, both states are facing a precarious future. Investigating the 'drama at the site of social interactions' (Ron 2009, 3) which can explain the sustained conflict following the CPA will be important for informing policy-oriented enquiries about what can be done to promote sustainable peace in both states. While only fragments of a full case study are shown below, the empirical material serves to ground, animate and colour this exposition of a networked relational analysis.

### *Actors as points*

Firstly, actors – the points – are denoted in networked relational analysis not as individuals but as groups or clusters who share a collective identity at a meso level of specificity. In a networked relational analysis, the 'international' and the 'local' are too macro to be considered coherent collective identities. Instead, specific INGOs, states, national governments, political parties and factions within them, community-based organisations, corporations, self-defining shared interest groups are internally coherent networked actors. It is important to establish whether the relations between actors are cooperative, uncooperative, dissenting, resisting, equal or unequal. This chimes with suggestions to consider relationships which coalesce, contend, and co-opt (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2016) but, crucially, networked relationality guides analysis towards the relations between the whole system of points and not only between macro dyads such as the local and international. Analysing relations between all relevant peacebuilding actors also helps to reveal that, while one actor may be labelled, for example, 'contentious' in one networked relation, they do not necessarily carry this identity throughout the whole structure of peacebuilding interactions. Furthermore, their contentiousness rises and falls during different activities and temporalities.

To illustrate, a relational analysis of actors in Sudan would begin with questions such as 'what relations between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) (the main political and armed group representing South Sudan) and other peacebuilding actors during the CPA have led towards the eruption of conflict in South Sudan?.' Here, a hypothetical hybrid relational analysis might be drawn towards analysing the relationship between the SPLM and the international mediators and sponsors. It might conclude that the international Troika - the USA, UK and Norway - dominated the SPLM to the extent that their overbearing influence set the South on a path towards a statebuilding project which was not sufficiently locally legitimated.

While the imposition of the international community is not irrelevant (Rolandsen 2011, 561; J. Young 2005), it is also only one aspect of a full picture and to present it alone could lead to misdirected policy interventions. A networked relational analysis of actor interactions would go beyond this to provide a picture of the broader structure of relations circulating around the SPLM. It would divide the SPLM itself into different actor groups and inquire about their legitimacy – not as a fixed characteristic – but as it appears between other relevant actors in the wider network and as it circulates under different conditions. While negotiating with Khartoum as a single entity, the SPLM was a fragile coalition of different armed and political factions brought together through conquest (Brosché and Duursma 2018). It won broad support among Southern Sudanese, eventually, and after departing with a plan for a unified 'New Sudan', on an anti-North secessionist agenda (Rolandsen 2011, 562). The SPLM therefore achieved legitimacy among the overall South Sudanese population when it came to negotiating with Khartoum and to representing the South in the transitional government. However, upon independence, the SPLM had not garnered the broad base of legitimacy nor fostered the 'resilient social contract' required to lead a statebuilding project (Kuol 2020). Indeed, the SPLM split into its prior factions along ethno-political lines shortly after independence (Ylönen 2016, 221).

A networked relational analysis of actors urges one not to ask whether the SPLM has sufficient legitimacy to maintain peace but to delve deeper and range wider: to ask what

factions within the SPLM had legitimacy among which other peacebuilding actors and to do what, exactly. Crucially, a networked relational analysis would ask where specifically in the network of actors is the SPLM legitimate and where is it illegitimate; under what circumstances does its legitimacy ebb or flow? Knowing this provides important material to ask subsequent normative questions about policy actions such as 'How can communities in South Sudan be supported to hold their government to account?.' If a hybrid analysis exposes a deficiency in legitimacy between the state and the society, networked thinking shows this is not due alone, or even significantly, because of the involvement of the Western Troika. It demonstrates the specific locations in the network where legitimacy is lacking. In doing so, it suggests where subsequent normative questions could be directed.

## *Ideologies as flows*

Ideologies should be analysed as flows between actors, as opposed to being conflated with the actors themselves. A networked relational approach specifically discourages the notion of, for example, 'liberal peace actors'. Instead, actors constitute 'points' and ideologies constitute the 'flows' between those points. Mische (2011, 9) has demonstrated that one of the ways in which relational scholars have made use of networked ideologies is through seeing them as 'pipelines of social influence, in the form of attitudes, ideas and innovations'. Just as Brigg (2018), Hunt (2018) and Martin de Almagro (2018) promote the analysis of de-essentialised identities, networked relationality does the same for ideologies. Maintaining a networked relationality ensures that peacebuilding ideologies, for example, liberalism, secularisation, or Islamism are not essentialised as part of actor identities such as the international, the local, or the state. This perspective enables the analysis of how peacebuilding ideologies circulate among points, sometimes clashing with one another, sometimes coalescing, sometimes compromising. It is not meaningful in a networked relational analysis to name one ideology dominant full stop, but its dominance must be located at specific relational sites and its fluidity must be traced throughout the network structure.

To illustrate using the Sudanese case, a relational analysis of ideologies in Sudanese peacebuilding might begin with a question 'How do the relations between peacebuilding ideologies during the CPA explain the emergence of conflict in the Republic of Sudan?.' A hypothetical hybrid relational analysis might be drawn to analyse the liberal ideologies of the World Bank and the British and American states as they vied for dominance with the Islamism of the Government of Sudan (GoS). It might conclude that the combination of liberal and Islamic ideologies that emerged from the CPA negotiations produced a state ripe for conflict. It was indeed the Troika of USA, Norway and UK who insisted on holding multi-party democratic elections in the North in the interim period before the Southern referendum (H. F. Johnson 2011, 136). This motivated the GoS to entrench its Islamist agenda to appease the numerous Arab dissidents it needed to maintain power. In turn, this gave peripheral rebel groups renewed grievance and incentivised them to renege from their commitments to peace talks (Natsios 2012, 155–161). Therefore, Islamism, combined with premature democratic events, can be seen to have created a bedrock for prolonged domestic conflict in the post-secession north.

While not without evidence, the above analysis is somewhat limited. A networked relational approach would guard against approaching the question from an essentialising position in which the GoS is defined as Islamist and 'the international' as liberal. A networked relational approach would instead ask where in the broader network of actors are different peacebuilding ideologies dominant? It would ask how does this variegated and fluid pattern of dominance pave the way for conflict? Aside from the fact that the numerous international actors did not have a unified 'liberal' position (Srinivasan 2014), a networked relational approach would reveal that there were elements of Islamism, socialism and liberalism in the GoS position outside of the influence of the international community. Each of these different ideologies appear in different areas of the broader peacebuilding network in patterns which are conflict-promoting.

To be clear, the Islamism pursued by the GoS was pragmatic in the context of national elections and did contribute to peripheral grievance. However, this ideological patronage had been part of Khartoumian strategy for decades (El Battahani 2006, 13). In addition to this, the GoS did not fully liberalise Sudanese markets – indeed, international sanctions prevented full insertion into global economies – but instead implemented a deep nationalisation of land and private business. Following the precedent set by Nimeiri, President Bashir gifted the military vast quantities of national assets thus creating a pseudo-private sector which was controlled by his armies (De Waal 2017). These activities resulted in a national economy which has elements of *laissez faire*, socialism and Islamism (Hussien and Dibie 2017). The ensuing network of patronage and the suppression of middle class social mobility can be seen as preconditions for the prolonged peripheral grievance which eventually incorporated the urban centre and culminated in the uprising against the GoS in 2019.

Furthermore, a networked relational analysis of peacebuilding ideologies would also direct attention towards the ideological underpinnings of the peripheral combatants and communities. Following the CPA, violence in northern Sudanese peripheral areas – most notoriously Darfur, but also The Three Areas and East Sudan – deteriorated drastically. An analysis of ideological relationality from a networked perspective reveals the ideological clashes taking place outside of international influence. In search of a peace dividend, the GoS sold land to investors for large agricultural projects resulting in the displacement of previously settled tribes. These newly mobile communities then entered competition for land in areas in which conflict had been ongoing for decades between settled tribes and so-called Arab nomads (Ayoub 2006, 15). This spurred a three-way ideological clash. Specifically, newly displaced tribes argued their rights to land emerged from their status as modern Sudanese citizens and tax-payers, while settled pastoralists appealed to customary law and Arab nomads drew on Islamic doctrine stating that all land belongs to Allah (Ayoub 2006, 15–16). This shifting narrative further intertwined tribal disputes into the government-periphery conflict and frustrated the community resolution mechanisms equipped to manage conflicts of such a nature.

Thus, a networked approach to ideological relationality urges a more comprehensive answer to questions about the ideological underpinnings of conflict when compared with a relational analysis informed only by hybridity. It is not the case that the 'liberal international' hybridises with an 'Islamist state' or a 'customary local' but rather

liberal, socialist, Islamic, and customary ideologies originate at various locations and circulate throughout the network of peace actors. Networked thinking shows how the patterns of these circulatory ideologies have thwarted peace in myriad ways. When informing policy interventions which aim to make peace in Sudan sustainable, it is important to know exactly where in the network these ideologies are clashing. For example, a hybrid analysis might highlight the need for policies which smooth over the intrusion of religion into democratic politics but a networked approach shows these policies would not only need to be directed at national electoral events. They would also need to take into account debates within communities about their own forms of authority and security.

### *Inherent recursivity*

In seeking to understand why a network structure exists in the ways it does, it is important to comprehend the various ways in which that network is self-produced. Riles (2001, 4) has offered a ubiquitously appropriate yet somewhat vague command to 'see the network twice' both 'inside and out'. I have taken this as a call to always bear in mind the iteratively creative relationship between any given component of the network, and the network in its entirety. In this way, networks must be seen twice, both from the inside, as they affect their components, and from the outside, as they are affected by their components.

Importantly for networked relationality, the points (actors) and flows (ideologies) are in relationships of reciprocity and interdependence. As Mische (2011, 17) argues, networks are 'mutually generative' of the interactions which compose them or, as put by Riles (2001, 172), networks have an 'an inherent recursivity'. There must be an appreciation of how the flows or points in question are simultaneously produced by, and creative of, the other relations of points and flows in which they are embedded. In other words, the analytical separation of actors into points and ideologies into flows does not entail a dismissal of their relatedness. To expand on the empirical examples above: a full understanding of the networked legitimacy of the SPLM among Southern Sudanese cannot be achieved without acknowledgement of its ideological shift from a unified secular 'New Sudan' to southern secessionism (D. H. Johnson 2013). Similarly, the nationalisation project of the GoS and the decimation of native administration in the peripheries cannot been fully understood without an appreciation of the power of the Islamist lobby within the traditional political parties – especially Hassan Al Turabi's branch of the National Islamic Front (Berridge 2017).

While a networked relational approach encourages the analytical distinction of actors and ideologies in order to resist their conflation, it does not, at the same time, ignore their interdependence. In practical terms, a comprehensive networked relational analysis should ideally take a two-track approach whereby actors are foregrounded first, and then ideologies or *vice versa*. In each half of the analysis, analysis of the latter should appear in service of the former. Alternatively, analysts could boundary their study by choosing to undertake either an investigation into actor relationality or ideological relationality. Either way, maintaining an inherently recursive perspective within a networked relational analysis enables a systematic analysis of actors and ideologies by paying respect to their interdependence yet avoiding their fusion.

### *Hinterlands*

Networked relationality is also adept to promote a politico-historical view of social systems. This prevents certain aspects of actor or ideological relationality being misattributed to peacebuilding when, in fact, they have their roots in other extra-peacebuilding encounters. In bringing this to light, White et al. (2007) have shifted the analytical focus away from networks alone toward sociocultural units which are termed "network-domains," or "netdoms". To expand, using Krieger and Belliger (2014, 21), 'The individual actors who participate in the network […] are themselves networks that have at any certain time been more or less 'black-boxed' into function roles […] They are what they are and can do what they can do because of the chain of associations in which they are "enrolled" and which constitutes the network'. In a concrete example, Castells (2010, 7) explains 'Roles (for example, to be a worker, a mother, a neighbour, a socialist militant, a union member, a basketball player, a churchgoer, and a smoker, at the same time) are defined by norms structured by the institutions and organisations of society'. Therefore, a peacebuilding network is itself comprised collectively by the historically constituted parameters produced during wider and prior, encounters.

Applied to peacebuilding, netdoms – or as named here; 'hinterlands' – refer to the relevant institutions and norms existing outside of the peacebuilding space but which are nevertheless informing and mediating how peacebuilding is structured. A hypothetical hybrid relational analysis might be drawn to analyse the 2019 uprising in Sudan from a perspective narrowly zoomed-in on the peacebuilding space. Many of the slogans of the uprising were soundbites lifted from classical liberalism: chants of 'Ḥurriyya, salām wa 'adāla. As-sawra xiyār aš-ša'b / Freedom, peace, and justice: The revolution is the choice of the people' reverberated around city centres where protestors gathered. They called for the 'Madaniyya / civil rule' and the abolition of Shari'a law (Casciarri and Manfredi 2020, 22, 36). In seeking to explain this, a hybrid analysis might be drawn towards attributing this to European NGO's peacebuilding education programmes rolled out to implement the CPA. Programmes such as the British Council's 'Active Citizens' and The Dutch 'Free Press Unlimited' promoted the Sudanese to hold their state accountable in the model of liberal democracies (Assal 2016).

However, a networked relational analysis, encourages a contextualisation of peacebuilding with encounters outside of the peacebuilding space. There are many reasons why this language came to the foreground of the protesters' agenda. One of them is that the group orchestrating the protests, the Sudanese Professionals Association, had grown out of the trade union movement which spearheaded the decolonial struggle against the British in the 1940s and 50s. Much of this professional class attended European Universities on post-colonial scholarship schemes and returned to Sudan during Nimeiri's budding socialism. Debates about social contracts, freedom, civil rule and such like were not only imported by peacebuilders in the wake of the CPA, but were already part of an autonomous Europhile professional class and an autonomously globally-connected youth. In addition, the slogans are in direct dialogue with those used in revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia – they might be linguistically identifiable as liberal but their conceptual journeys are not Western in origin (Casciarri and Manfredi 2020, 22). So-called 'liberal' ideologies of the uprising in 2019, or at least their language, were not a result of

hybridisation during post-CPA peacebuilding interventions but had their roots in much older and broader networked encounters.

As such, the analysis of interdependent peacebuilding networks of actors and ideologies must be taken in concert with the hinterland of macronetworks which inform their composition. These broader networks show that liberal democratic claims made by some groups have a long locally embedded history and have not simply been imposed by external actors during CPA peacebuilding. This way, the ground is paved for a subsequent normative analysis of how these ideological clashes should be addressed in the post-conflict context. Under a networked relational analysis, policies directed at supporting Sudan to secure sustainable peace in its new era will be informed by a rich and historicised understanding of ideological clashes between the Sudanese Professionals Association and the Islamist military.

## Conclusions, limitations and ways forward

This article has examined the use of hybridity as the key critical lens for analysing interactions between actors and ideologies in peacebuilding scholarship. While acknowledging the distance travelled since the *mission civilisatrice* critique of peace interventions, I have agreed with observers that analytical hybridity is somewhat held back by its foundational concept: hybridity as conceptualised by Bhabha. I have agreed with suggestions that relational thinking can be used to bolster hybrid peace analysis but that it is a necessary but insufficient supplement. I argued that networked thinking can offer a fuller picture.

To this end, I have outlined the three contributions of a networked relational approach as a) the analytical separation of actors and ideologies b) the analytical focalisation on situatedness and circularity of both actor characteristics and ideological dominance c) the analytical inclusion of the broader and prior encounters which have composed the peacebuilding structure. Sudanese peacebuilding in the wake of the CPA has been used to animate this framework. I have shown how an analytical framework informed by networked relationality can start chains of enquiries which end up informing policy interventions in service of sustainable peace. In this way, the article has proposed a framework in which the network is offered up as one possible extension of hybrid relationality.

A note on limitations and impetus for further research: I recognise that networked relationality is not a panacea which will remedy all difficulties associated with analysing peacebuilding spaces. Indeed, at first glance it may appear to be unmanageably cumbersome and unpragmatic. It may also seem bombastic; as though it is offering a 'theory of everything' approach. The best way to assess this proposal is to see it in the context of critiques of analytical hybridity in peace studies and especially against a background of the current rise in relational thinking as a complement to hybridity. It should not be viewed as a critique of all forms of analysis of peacebuilding spaces, nor even as a critique of all uses of hybridity in peace studies. Specifically, the main purpose of networked relationality is to offer a supplementary concept to analytical hybridity which is the dominant framework for enquiries into interactions between actors and ideologies during peacebuilding. For research questions which might have identified hybridity as an appropriate analytical guide – specifically, those interested in the coalescence of multiple peacebuilding actors and ideologies – networked relationality can be seen as one possible complement to analytical hybridity.

I do not claim its suitability for all research questions related to peacebuilding analysis: there are many studies which analyse interactions from, for example, political economy perspectives. Intersectional feminism has also been deployed in several innovative studies of power (Al-Ali and Tas 2017; Martin de Almagro 2018; McLeod 2015). Also, numerous studies which assess the impact on peace of individual peace initiatives such as security sector reform or transitional justice. I do not intend that networked relationality encroaches on their space. Furthermore, the *descriptive* and *normative* applications of hybridity in peace studies, as explained at the start of the article, are not being contested. Instead, I demarcate the scope of this networked relational approach as having similar confines to analytical hybridity: specifically, it questions about interactions between actors and ideologies during peacebuilding.

This framework has been sketched rather than fully demonstrated here. It can be seen to promote a direction of travel which guards hybrid analysis against its most common and enduring critiques. It is only through its application in full case studies that a networked relational approach to peacebuilding analysis can be developed and refined. Therefore, I present the framework as a gesture towards, and invitation for, further theoretical and applied study.

## Notes

1. While other analytical lenses exist – see, for example, complexity frameworks (Brusset, De Coning, and Hughes 2016; Millar 2016) – the dominance of hybridity is reflected by its recent up-take in international peacebuilding practice. There has been a 'transition from liberal to hybrid peacebuilding in the documentation of international organisations involved in peacebuilding, including the EU, UNDP, World Bank and OECD' (Wallis and Richmond 2017, 424).
2. It should also be mentioned that scholarship in this area recognises that attempts to hybridise, while made with sincere intentions to empower locals, can also have a 'dark side' and produce unwanted deleterious effects (Simangan 2018; Wallis, Jeffery, and Kent 2016).
3. When I refer to hybridity as a theory, or foundational concept and not as an analytical framework, I am referring to it in its original form as a critical theory and before its application to peace studies.
4. Relational thinking is not new to peacebuilding. It was put forward by Morray and Liang (2005), Chadwick, Debiel, and Gadinger (2013), Schluter and Ives (2018) in practice and policy-oriented literature to recommend a focus on the relationships between actors – and not the actors as entities in and of themselves. This fairly literal engagement with relationality has been theoretically revitalised, in particular by Brigg (2018) and Joseph (2018) who have re-embedded it within its rich ontological tradition.
5. Although it must be noted that many scholars have criticised hybridity as unradical in its decoloniality since its ultimate aim is to argue for the necessity of peacebuilding intervention. As Bargués-Pedreny and Randazzo (2018) argue, hybridity has primarily been deployed to critique the international but to ultimately encourage intervention.
6. There is a broader background debate in philosophy of social science between positivists, post-positivists and critical realists which need not take up space here. But, briefly, my opposition to crypto-normativity does not come from a naïve positivist position but from within critical realism where it is accepted that all research is value-laden while, at the same time, epistemological relativism is resisted.
7. A pun on the Kantian 'categorial imperative', rather than its conceptual opposite, the 'anti-categorial imperative' is intended to guard against essentialisation, in the same way Brigg (2018) has identified.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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